



# Community Television Review

Spring 1983  
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## ACCESS AND MANAGEMENT



# INTRODUCING

## IRIS Cable Video Conference System:

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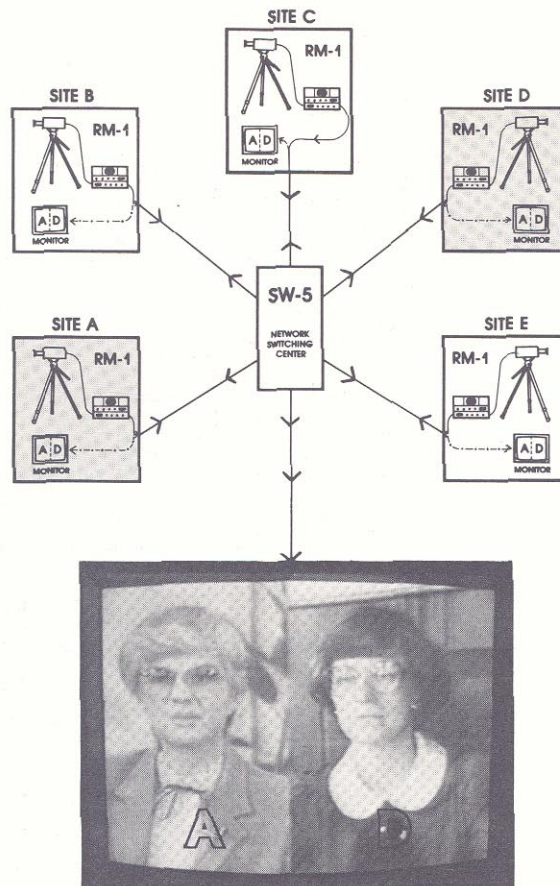
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Service Agencies | Hospitals, Libraries                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business and Industry   |  |

**The RM-1 will be on display  
at the NFLCP National Convention, Portland, Oregon, July 14-16, 1983.**



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915 Washington Street, Reading, PA. 19601 (215) 378-1106  
Jerry Richter, President



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## Letter From Managing Editor

*Trisha Dair and I have been working the past few months to implement the transition of the Community Television Review to its new home in Washington*

*The NFLCP Board of Directors has selected a 5 member editorial board to oversee the policy and content of the CTR. They are: Susan Bednarczyk, Trisha Dair, Jean Rice, Bill Rushton, and George Stoney. I will be handling the production end as managing editor.*

*The board and I have already been working together on this issue and future issues. We have decided the themes for the next year: Institutional Networks — summer, Labor Uses of Cable — fall, and International Access — winter.*

*Themes will continue to appear in the CTR as inserts and we will be developing regular columns as the body of the publication. We hope this will give the CTR continuity from issue to issue.*

*The Access Center Profile column will continue to appear quarterly. And we will be developing new features: interviews with leading personalities in cable, book reviews of new cable publications, programming reviews of community access channels, finally a letters to the editor column.*

*I am especially interested in receiving your input for our letters to the editor column. I encourage you to write us in care of the national office concerning the content, format, and article selection of the CTR.*

*The Editorial Board and I hope to continue to send informative and thought provoking issues of the CTR to you on a quarterly basis. The next issue is due to be in the mail in mid September. Please contact the national office if you have not been receiving your copies — the CTR is sent third class and will not be forwarded if you have moved. Please note, since only two issues of the CTR were printed in 1982 subscribers will receive the first two issues of 1983 to complete their subscription.*

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# PROFILE

## Community Television Begins To Take Root On The Last Frontier

The world is brought to Nome, as to many other remote villages and towns in Alaska, on a daily basis through satellite-delivered programming, and the percentage of Alaskans (90 percent within the next two years) with access to cable television is higher than in any other state. Alaska is one-fifth the size of the rest of the country and cable television has always made sense here, since rugged terrain, extreme weather conditions, sparse population and great distances limit the availability of broadcast TV.

Only recently, though, has community access television begun to take root in Alaska. Since January, for example, locally-produced programs have been cablecast twice a week on one channel of Nome Cablevision, a 12-channel system with 650 subscribers.

Nome is a community of slightly more than 3,000 people, 60% of whom are Eskimos. Now, along with Home Box Office movies and national newscasts, the cable system carries such community-oriented programming as a demonstration of Eskimo dances and songs, the history of reindeer in the Nome area and a sled dog mushing demonstration. The past blends with the present when community access reports on oil exploration, a controversial issue due to its potential impact on the lifestyles of Nome residents.

Nome and Anchorage, the state's largest city, have gone the farthest in developing access programs, although several other Alaskan towns use cable facilities to produce community programming.



Muzzleloading Rifle Association members Richard Donovan and Richard York appeared in "Mt. McKinley Men." This program about the association's annual meeting in Hurricane, Alaska was aired on Multi-Vision's community access channel in Anchorage.

### Anchorage

Because of the size of its system and its potential for growth, Anchorage's Multi-Visions cable company supports the most comprehensive community access program in the state. MultiVisions' staff includes a full-time access coordinator, Martha Roderick and one assistant. The company provides two portable units and editing equipment for access users.

MultiVisions is in the process of building a cable system for the 200,000 residents of Anchorage, half the state's population. Roderick began working on the project in January 1982, six months before construction of the system got underway. It was a year later that

enough people had been trained to use the video equipment and enough programs had been made to begin programming a weekly schedule.

Roderick sees the Open Channel's role as an important one in the community. "I know there are people who do not read with enthusiasm and get a lot of information from television," she says. "Community television can help keep them informed," And she's always felt it important to have people involved with their community. "I've always thought that it was important for the public to have access to all the types of media, to have a way to communicate without being entirely subject to the selectivity of the owners of the media."





Martha Roderick, community coordinator for the Anchorage-based cable company, MultiVisions.

To get people involved, Roderick keeps up a schedule of meetings with clubs and schools, especially in areas where cable has just become available. The number of subscribers has changed daily since the system began hooking up customers in the Anchorage civilian community in the fall of 1982. Two nearby military bases — Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson — have had cable service since the fall of 1980.

The Open Channel signed on the air on January 5 of this year. The first show was "Superstation KKDS," a series performed and videotaped by eleven youngsters from Anchorage, Nome and Unalaska, a small village. It was followed by "McKinley Mountain Men," a program taped by the Alaskan Muzzle-Loading Rifle Association.

Since then, programs have offered a cross-section of Alaskan life, with (through May) thirty-five programs

shot and edited with the cable company's equipment, fifteen others produced locally with other gear, and two produced at other cable companies (one in Oregon and the other in California). The remainder were programs available to community groups that were deemed suitable to the Open Channel concept.

MultiVisions' Open Channel has featured programs on such community events as the Renaissance Open Air Pleasure Faire, a bluegrass music festival, a composers' workshop and a gospel music concert. During Women's History Month in March, featured programs included "Four Women of Unalaska" and "Women of the Alaska Territory." Such topics as emergency first aid for animals, "History of Kenlein," abortion, cross country skiing, nursing, astrology, Neighborhood Watch, Alaska Youth Leadership Seminar, oil lease

bidding, "Boxing Alaska Style" and "An Alaskan's Guide to Complaining" have also been covered during the Open Channel's first five months.

Some programs have been produced by students, including "Up Against the Wall," on what it's like to have a learning disability.

Another, "Avoid Video Void," was produced by a University of Alaska art professor as an experiment in using the electronic media to explore the art world, Roderick said.

By the end of May, more than a hundred programs will have aired on MultiVisions' Channel 3, 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. each Wednesday. The rest of the week the channel features a character-generated calendar of community events and, when available, government and municipal information.



## Nome

In Nome, programming on the new access channel is decided by a committee of volunteers called Nome Public Access Cable Television, or NPACT.

Bob Allison, president of Alaska Cablevision Inc., which manages systems in Nome and six other Alaskan towns, says that Nome was the community where people seemed most interested in providing community programming. The company purchased the systems in 1980, and spent two years concentrating on an extensive program of technical improvements.

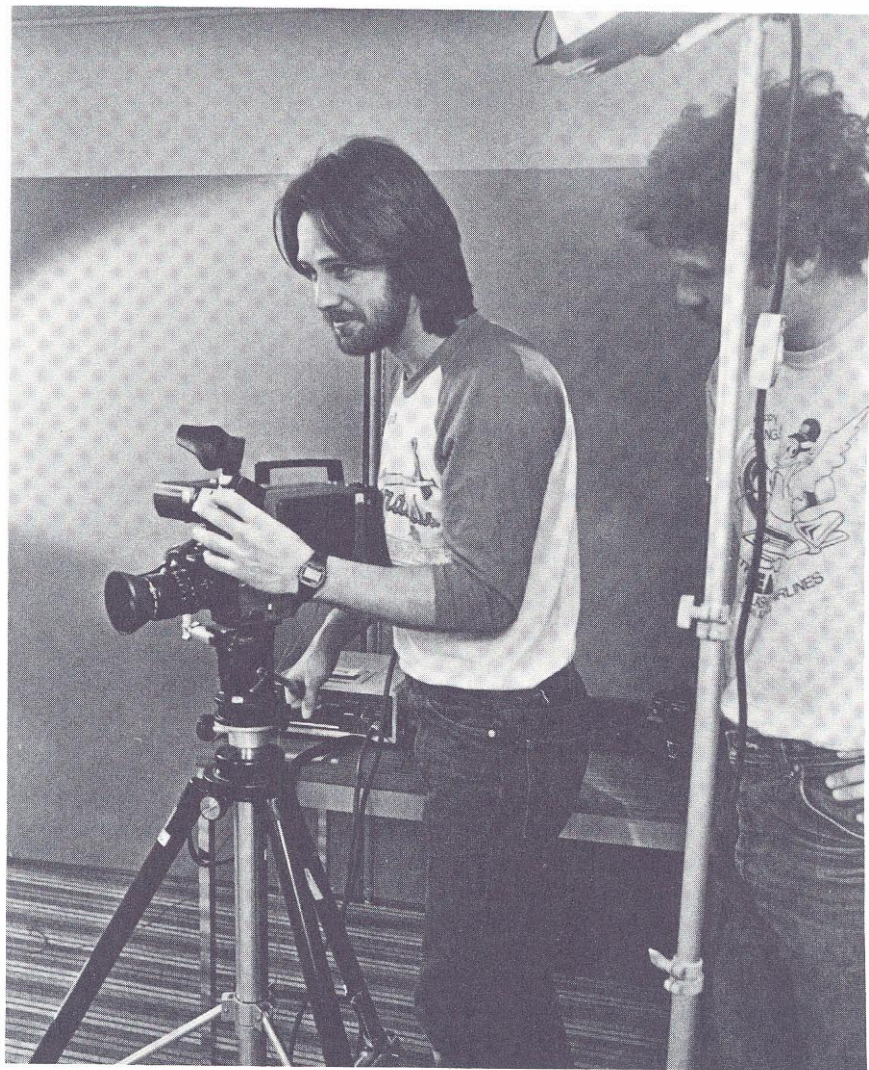
"Late last year, with all our planned technical improvements nearing completion, it seemed like a good time to turn to more active community involvement," Allison says. "The folks in Nome were the most enthusiastic, so we worked with them to get a pilot program underway."

Cary Bolling, NPACT committee member and director of the Media Center at Northwest Community College in Nome, envisions using the channel for a variety of community uses, both for entertainment and information. It can, he said, reflect the diversity of Nome's population, including programs in the different Eskimo languages of the region, which lies along the shores of the Bering Sea.

We can videotape the (Eskimo) Elder's Conference and show it the next day on local television, for example. We can eventually televise the city council meetings or any other meetings on oil development or mining or fishing or whatever. Television doesn't just have to come to us over the satellite or from distant signals," Bolling said in an interview in the *Nome Nugget*, a local newspaper.

"The community access program is good for Nome," Bolling says, "because we didn't have any other locally-originated television in Nome. We only have one newspaper and two radio stations, both religiously-oriented.... You know, video today is like the book was in the Middle Ages."

NPACT uses equipment from Northwest Community College, the same equipment Bolling uses to teach his video classes. The college produces an hour of programming a week. The rest of the channel's



Cary Bolling, NPACT committee member and director of the Media Center at Northwest Community College in Nome, films a community access program.

programming comes from local volunteer producers and films prepared by agencies that fit the community access format.

Bolling does not pretend that everything is perfect with Nome's new access program. "We don't have anything to go by up here," he says. "It was kind of dropped in our lap." Of the nine-member task force, none of whom had ever worked with community access, Bolling says he doesn't know if that is "too many people to make a decision." However, he points out that the program was designed as a six-month pilot project. When that time is up at the end of June, changes can and probably will be made.

Until then, Bolling sees a real need for the community access

programming. "It relates to the people here, giving them an image of what the town is like, to see Nome from a subjective point of view. to show the people of Nome that we have problems, issues that we have to deal with, but also that we have a nice community here."

A lot of people feel isolated from "Outside" (the rest of the United States). All of the media they see, especially television, comes from out of their area. Now they can see themselves, see the town, have their own say, have their own input in the medium of television, giving them an active way to participate."



## Ketchikan

In Ketchikan and Sitka, both in Southeast Alaska, the emphasis has been on local origination rather than access. But Ketchikan is now going through a transition period, according to system manager Warren Hennigan. Previously, the Ketchikan system offered one channel to serve as an outlet for local programming, produced by members of the system's staff. The results were what one might find on a local broadcast station in a small community.

Until recently a staff member was involved in all productions and created such programs as a series of reports on the Ketchikan Indian Corporation's early childhood development program, Ketchikan's alternative high school and the school district's Sea-Ed program. The system has also been involved with telecasting fund-raising events and the local Youth Football League. During the fall political battles, the system broadcasts live debates between candidates.

The system has a studio and equipment, and students from the local high school now come in once a week to produce "Ketchikan High News and Views." Hennigan hopes to put together a cooperative program with Ketchikan Community College and have a community access coordinator.

"We're kind of revamping our goals right now," he says. "I can't project exactly what we and the school can put together, but the goal is more community input. In the past, everything we did was a McCaw/Cablevision production. And we felt this wasn't the way it should be. We just want to make the community more responsible for creating the program."

## Sitka

Meanwhile in Sitka, "We always made space available for local programming, incorporating it into one of the tape-delay channels," says Mike White, who recently was transferred to the McCaw system in Ferndale, Washington, after 11 years in Sitka. Sitka's local programming is produced by members of the community and the cable staff, but mostly by the staff.

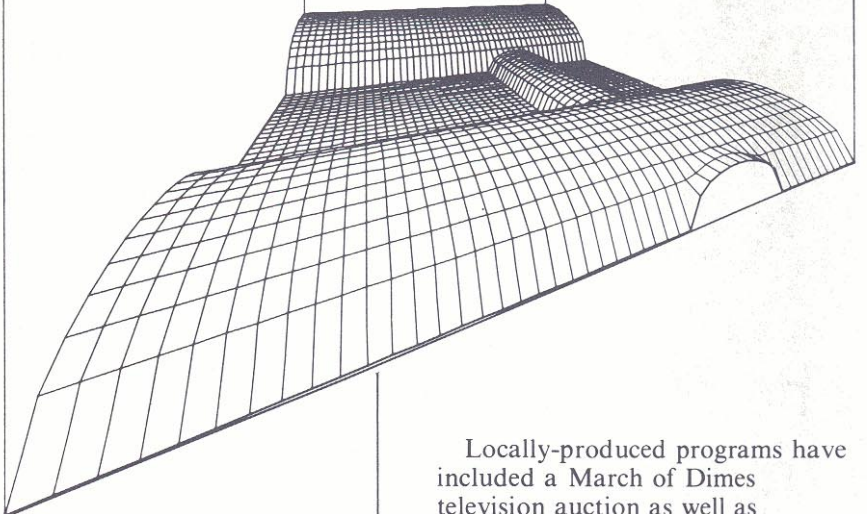
As in Ketchikan, the Sitka system is trying to work out a program with a local college to create a true access channel with expanded community participation. White recalls that when cable first came into the fishing town in 1959 there was no other television entertainment, so the local channel was set up "like a local television station, and has just expanded over the years."

Locally-produced programs have included a March of Dimes television auction as well as fundraisers for the Heart Association and Easter Seals. The system also shows already-produced programs from the school district and other groups.

The Sitka system has equipment for loan to the community, which is, White added, not so much interested in the technical quality of a show, but very glad that some local programming is being shown on cable.

From Nome to Ketchikan (a distance greater than the miles across the continental United States) cable television helps to unite Alaskans, a people who find that regionalism is among their largest stumbling blocks toward the future.

The recent trend toward increased community programming throughout the state, and efforts to share local programs among the systems that serve Alaska's far-flung communities, should help Alaskans get better acquainted with one another.





# INTERVIEW



## The Reverend Dr. Everett C. Parker

*Dr. Everett C. Parker will retire as director of the Office of Communications, United Church of Christ, (UCC), August 31st, after 29 years as an exponent of citizens rights in communication. Under the leadership of Dr. Parker, UCC's work in communications has led to significant victories for public interest in the media. Their efforts have produced such landmark decisions as establishment of the right for citizen groups to be heard by Federal agencies and appeal to courts. This decision was passed by Justice Warren Burger, then a Circuit Court Judge, when UCC challenged a Jackson, Mississippi TV station owner's license renewal citing discrimination against WLB-TV's black viewers. Eventually the license was revoked for disobeying the Communications Act requirement to serve "the public interest, convenience or necessity." In 1968, UCC petitioned the FCC to establish equal employment rules that would bring broadcasting stations into compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Over the years, UCC has conducted workshops to teach poor people how to get their materials in newspapers, radio and TV. And recently, they held workshops to teach the public how to monitor local broadcasts to assure community service.*

*The NFLCP and its membership owe a great debt to Dr. Parker for paving the road toward better access to the media. In the following interview and speech, Dr. Parker discusses his concerns and hopes for communications.*

**What circumstances caused you to become interested in the public's access to the media?**

I was a political science major in college and wrote my thesis on the Federal Communications Commission. I realized that after one year of establishment, the FCC was a creature of the industry even then. I wanted to work on access to media. I was concerned that the air waves belong to public and should be open to them on a regular basis.

**I guess you are really one of the original pioneers of religious broadcasting?**

Yes.

**What do you think of this area today, (the PTL Clubs and Christian Broadcasting Network)?**

It's nothing but commercial, commercial religion. It's a shame. They become this way because they know the FCC will not be going after them to change. They have been the cause of pushing religion off the air.

**The UCC has accomplished many feats in the past 29 years. What would you say is its finest accomplishment?**

Oh — that would be WLB-TV, it gave the public strength and then forcing the FCC to issue EEO rules. It really has made a difference in employment in the industry. And many prize winning shows have come from this office not many people view us as that — but we have produced good programming. And I think being recognized with integrity as a news dissemination agency.

**What are your plans for retirement:**

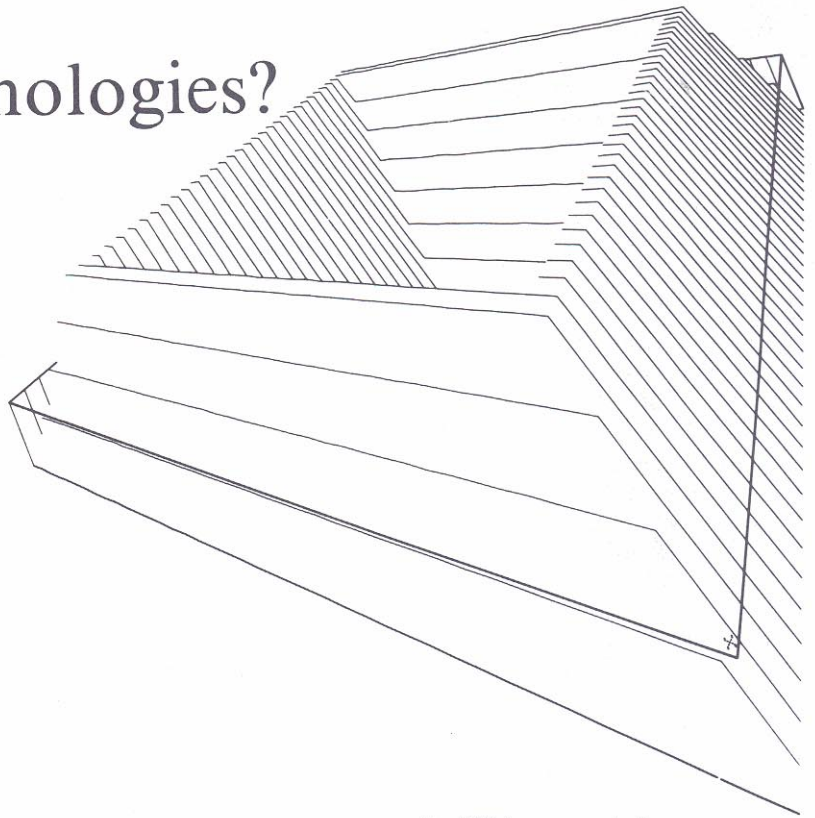
I will be teaching at Fordum University in the Communications department. I haven't really had the time to think beyond that — we've been so busy around here. I am toying with the idea of going into private business.

**Who will be taking over your duties at UCC?**

Dr. Beverly Chain, she is head of a large promotional facility in the Methodist part of Global Industries.



# Who Will Benefit From The New Technologies?



*Address of the Rev. Dr. Everett C. Parker, director of the Office of Communication, United Church of Christ, before the meeting of the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers, St. Paul, MN, Friday, July 9, 1982, 1 p.m.*

**W**e are in the midst of a communications revolution that is bringing about a shift in our way of living that dwarfs our shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy a century ago. Every means of work and relationships will undergo change: how we use energy, what jobs are available, what products we will be permitted to buy, how churches and other public organizations will conduct their affairs, even how we will live in families. But even our best experts on the workplace are unable to forecast what life will be like two decades from now.

The dominant force for change is the marriage of electronic means of communication to the computer. A number of technologies that provided communication channels or handled information, and which were once individually distinct, have now been molded into a single whole. Telephones, satellites, television and radio, cable-tv, microwave circuits and computers are now so interrelated that the difference between communications and computer services is impossible to distinguish.

In our own generation, we have seen the automobile and television appear and be developed by means of technology and raw economic power, rather than by reason and planning. Our lives were reshaped, willy nilly. The same thing is happening today with communications. The men who control communications have created perhaps the most powerful Washington lobby in our history, and politicians are flying blind at their bidding, setting the rules for this communications game.

That is how it has always been, since Marconi introduced radio; Congress has legislated at the behest of commercial interests, mostly to enhance their ability to turn a profit. The Federal Communications Act of 1934 — which is the only policy base for electronic communication this nation has ever had — basically codified what was already a fact — the commercial control of radio. In formulating the Act, Congress did not wrestle much with long-term issues, such as how the nation could most benefit from the exciting new force, called radio; or how to make the legislation flexible so the system could be redesigned if it did not work out to the advantage of the American people as a whole.

By 1934, many stations were owned by nonprofit organizations, especially schools and churches. Commercial interests promised fervently that they would fulfill the needs of education, religion, government and cultural interests if they were made licensees. Some members of Congress were unconvinced that these promises would be kept. Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York introduced an amendment to set aside 25 percent of the radio frequencies for use by nonprofit entities. He argued that a substantial portion of the new form of communication, which is dependent on a scarce natural resource — the spectrum —, should be dedicated to public service.

The Wagner-Hatfield amendment was defeated. Within months, the vast majority of nonprofit stations were forced off the air, to be replaced by commercial operators who were largely indifferent to public service programming.

The same thing occurred in television. First the licensees, starved for programs, were eager to have their schedules filled from the public sector. Then, as the commercial value of time increased, public service programming was curtailed, until now it is practically nonexistent.



There is no reason to think that cable will fare any differently in the normal course of events. A recent survey of cable operators by *Multichannel News* revealed that, while there is a substantial amount of local programming now, they expect to reduce this service to about two percent of total programming within the next five years.

Cable is the 'baby of the electronic family, grossing about \$3.5 billion in subscriber and pay-cable fees, but growing fast — at the rate of about 250,000 subscribers a month. The recent Supreme Court decision outlawing State mandated fees for cabling apartment buildings may put a damper on cable expansion into large cities for a time. But cable is so fashionable, that some way will probably be found to negotiate bearable fees for building owners — unless the DBS operators get there first.

It is unfortunate that the coming of cable is being accepted uncritically by communities from one end of the country to the other. Surveys show that most respondents think that cable is television signals, sports channels and Home Box Office. Very little concern is being expressed about *de facto* control of content by communication conglomerates that can combine marketing power with ownership of media to dominate the marketplace. The entry of the broadcasting networks into cable ownership poses one such threat.

The fact is that cable, as it is now progressing, poses a serious threat to freedom of expression and to desirable diversity in the content of programs, because the cable system can become the sole communication source in a local community. The operator who has the right to pull the cutoff switch has the power, ultimately, to determine what we may see, hear and read. Another danger of unrestricted cable operating power is that cable can markedly widen the gap between the communication rich and the communication poor by not serving unprofitable neighborhoods and classes of people.

Even though the vast majority of our cable systems still have only twelve channels, the time of the small cable operator has passed. Because of its high capital requirements, it seems inevitable that virtually all of cable will fall into the hands of seven to ten leading companies, who may also own most of the other telecommunication facilities in the United States. We must be prepared to deal with that possibility in making communication policy.

It is fashionable in Washington to wax lyrical about new telecommunications technologies and services, such as direct broadcasting from satellites, that are not even in place yet. Chairman Mark Fowler of the Federal Communications Commission and other industry partisans argue that the mere possibility of diversified sources of entertainment and information justifies the deregulation of those media that are now operative: telephones, broadcasting, cable and satellites. We are told, without one iota of proof, that marketplace forces will take over when regulation leaves off and that they will guarantee that the public interest will be splendidly served; because deregulation will foster widespread competition.

The fact is that, almost without exception, the businesses that are engaged in telecommunications already enjoy a monopoly and are reaching for market dominance. They want multiple ownership and cross ownership of broadcasting stations, cable systems, newspapers, telephone channels and computerized data banks. They are busily restructuring themselves, both vertically and horizontally, to control all phases of communication from the manufacture of hardware to the production and dissemination of programs. By opposing the Fairness Doctrine and equal time rights of political candidates, they are reaching for political control of access to the channels of communication.


One of the great dangers we face is that our whole communications system will fall under monopoly control, perhaps eventually under the control of one entity, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. After all, the wired nation is not in the future. Ma Bell has those wires into all of our homes right now.

For our very survival, we cannot let the government wash its hands of rational policymaking in telecommunications and of oversight of the means of communication. The government is responsible for protecting the interest of the public and the integrity of our community life. But unless we move quickly to stop deregulation and to have consumer protection legislation passed, the communications revolution will take place with the American people as its victims rather than its masters.

It is late — but not too late — for the nation to take seriously the implications of the communications revolution and to debate them and make policy decisions. We need, particularly, to face up to the crucial issues that relate to the respective roles that industry and the public, through the government, can and will play in directing the development of electronic communication policy and facilities.

Our communication system is the crucial lifeline of our democratic institutions. It is the medium through which we maintain respect for the sanctity and equality of each person. Vital social issues that center in communication urgently require us to become advocates for the ethical principles we all claim to be guided by. Such advocacy is especially called for now before the Congress, the FCC and appropriate State and local policy makers. There is no substitute for speaking out.





**A journey of  
a thousand miles  
begins with  
the first step.**

Lao Tzu

The National Federation of Local Cable Programmers has come a long way since taking its first, careful step in 1976. From the dream of a few dedicated people, the NFLCP has grown to become a respected, influential organization with nearly 2,000 members.

United Cable Television is proud to have contributed to the NFLCP's phenomenal success. We have encouraged our community programming employees to become active members and serve as officers. Many of our systems are members, and we were the first MSO to join at the Corporate level. United has co-hosted many NFLCP regional conferences and the 1980 National Convention in East Lansing, Michigan. We are already involved in the planning of the 1984 National Convention, to be held in the Denver area.

United Cable Television has made contributions to numerous NFLCP projects, including a startup grant for the Access Director Training Program.

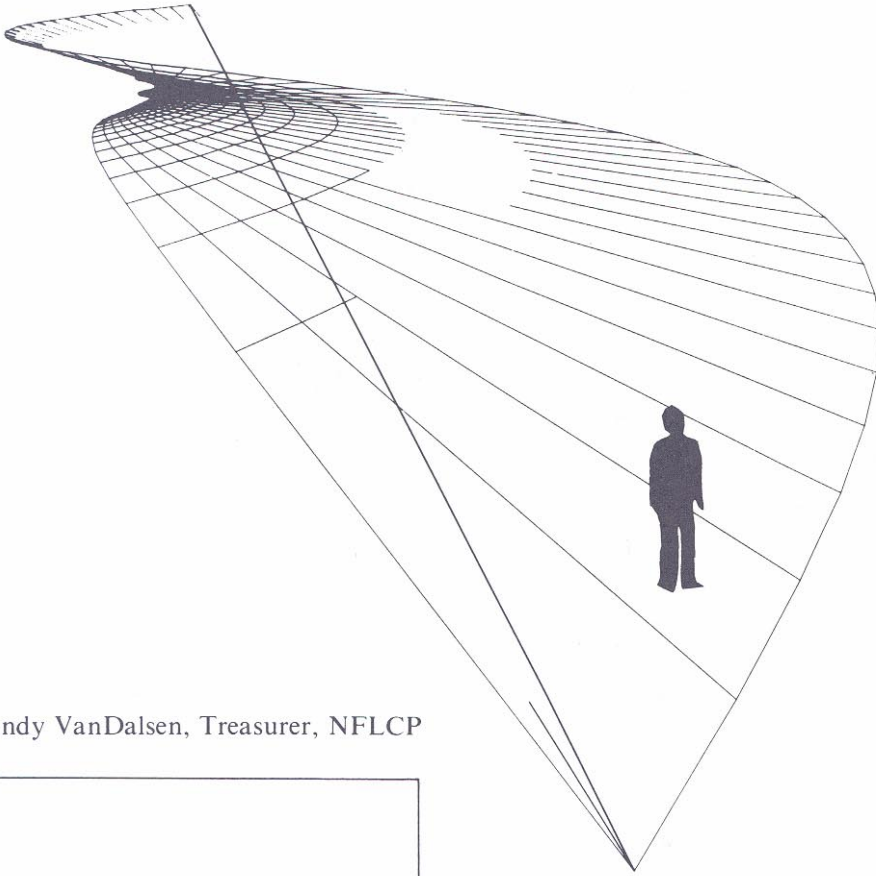
United Cable Television congratulates the NFLCP for its many achievements during these first seven years. We wish you continued success in the years ahead.



**united  
cable television  
corporation**



# The Future of Access: What Lies Ahead?



By Randy VanDalsen, Treasurer, NFLCP

Advocates of access to cable TV have reached a very important crossroads. On the surface, the vista laid out before us is truly breathtaking. Access center growth continues to increase. Much more money is being invested in these centers than ever before. The national media, for the most part, are no longer simply writing off public access as programs cablecast by a small group of pornographers in New York City. The techniques we have developed to catalyze high levels of community-responsive programming are being passed on to a new generation of enthusiastic access coordinators. And, eloquent new spokespersons who defend the concept of access are appearing in dozens of communities now joining the wired nation.

There are, however, a number of developments surfacing which should moderate the celebration of our achievements during the past ten years.

## Federal Legislation

Many cable operators have been slow to deliver on the commitments agreed to in their highly competitive franchise victories. Their trade associations are now embroiled in an all-out effort to pass federal legislation which would strip the powers of franchising authorities to enforce these promises (which may have been the primary reasons why the triumphant companies were selected in the first place!). These defenders of the free enterprise system appear to be hard at work undermining it. They had agreed to the rules which allowed any and all applicants for a cable franchise to present their proposals, and may the best bid win. Many industry leaders have now decided, however, that this system hasn't worked to their advantage and they have run to the feds for legislation

to bail them out. They point accusing fingers at the nation's cities, blaming them for "outrageous demands."

In reality, the driving force behind the tremendous expansion of franchise offerings was the free enterprise system itself. A bidding company would study a request for proposals and use it as a minimum base upon which to build. The next step, one which was much more important, would be to study proposals likely competitors previously submitted in other markets. With this information in mind, a company would then attempt to deliver a proposal that was significantly superior overall to the competition's efforts, and to work diligently to convince the franchising authority of this fact.

## Hiring Policies

Another serious problem is the fact that all too often people being hired to oversee community programming operations couldn't be any worse. People with no aptitude for dealing regularly with a wide cross-section of individuals and organizations, but with "broadcasting experience," are frequently selected as access coordinators. Someone who clearly sees this job as little more than a stepping-stone to (or back into) the "big time" of broadcasting cannot function well in success. The essential element for success which shines through all of our past experiences is a highly-motivated staff which is totally dedicated to the underlying philosophy of the access movement. An ambivalent coordinator, on the other hand, is an integral part of a system designed to fail.



## Equipment Selection

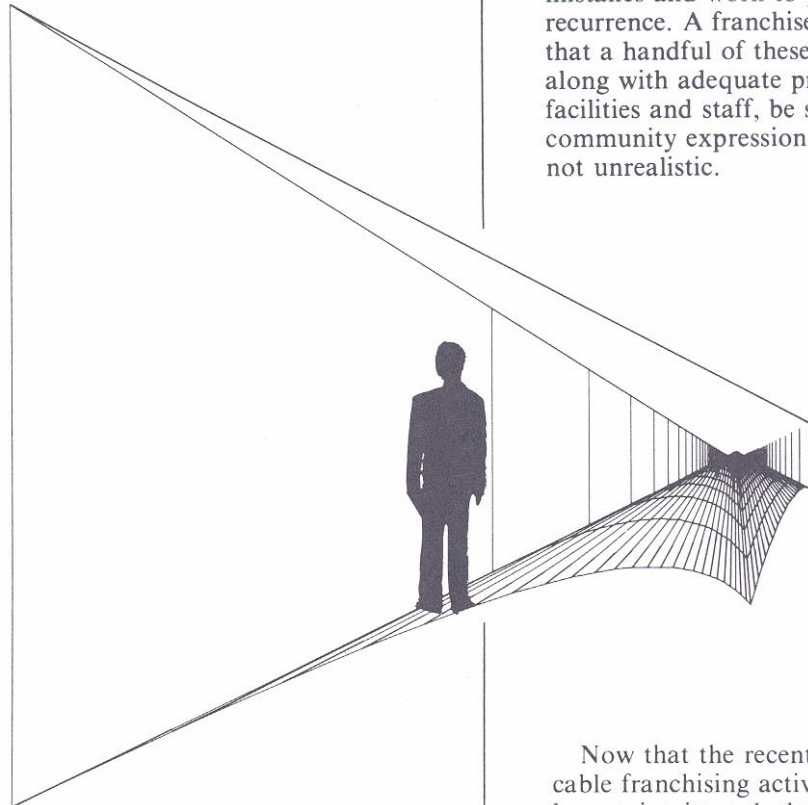
An associated development to be concerned with is the growing preoccupation with "broadcast quality" hardware. Recent breakthroughs by manufacturers have driven down the price of such sophisticated equipment, thus making it within the reach of modern access center budgets. However, should this be the only option available for use by a first-time access volunteer? Will a senior citizen feel comfortable with a \$10,000 three-tube portapak in tow on that first remote shoot, or a studio switcher with dozens of built-in effects, or a computer-controlled editing system? The elementary question which begs to be asked is whether or not the hardware is *appropriate* for the skill level of the user. In a new access center operation the vast majority of potential programmers will be starting at square one. The "user-friendliness" of the equipment to these individuals should be a paramount concern.

In addition, we must remember that the reason for the existence of these access centers is not to create pictures which satisfy the most demanding video technicians, but to provide a programming outlet for the widest range of interests within the community. An access coordinator must be one who realizes that such diversity is the primary goal, not network TV "quality."

## Local Origination

The re-emergence of "local origination", (LO), — programming produced and controlled by the cable operator — is also beginning to create new headaches. In some areas, local origination is the only type of community programming in place, with public access being either ignored or actively discouraged. LO

is looked upon with far greater respect — due to its revenue-generating potential and ability to be controlled — than its public access counterpart, which is too often treated like an idiot bastard stepchild. In some instances the local origination director, which receives far more attention from the system manager than the access coordinator, treats the access operation as a "training ground" for future LO programs. Apparently, once an access program seems to reach a point of sufficient technical proficiency and audience appeal, it should be guided into the "more able hands of the LO crew." In other words, since their prejudicial view is that the public access programming is amateurish and boring, they're trying to ensure that



it stays that way. Community programmers and franchise authorities must be ever watchful for such negative attitudes by staff and work diligently to forestall such developments.

## Freedom of Speech

All of us who care so deeply about the future vitality of the access movement should regularly remind ourselves why it is so important. Access to cable television is a modern extension of one of this country's most cherished traditions: freedom of speech.

Should full First Amendment right be granted only to those wealthy enough to own and operate a cable system, providing up to 100 channels of programming that they alone approve? Can we really believe that these big companies will actively work to encourage all voices to be heard on "their" channels? The broadcasting industry (where increasing numbers of cable executives have paid their dues) has a history littered with instances where views unpalatable to station owners were snuffed out. It is imperative that we learn from these mistakes and work to prevent their recurrence. A franchise requirement that a handful of these channels along with adequate production facilities and staff, be set aside for community expression is certainly not unrealistic.

Now that the recent flurry of cable franchising activity appears to be nearing its end, the next vital step is ensuring compliance with franchise provisions which led to an applicant's success. Proposals which spoke so glowingly about the importance of community access to new channels of communication must be treated seriously and enforced diligently.





## Who Should Manage Access?

### Austin: Nonprofit managed access still going strong

By Paula Manley and Martha Hartzog

**T**he history and development of public access television is rooted in the efforts of nonprofit, community organizations. Before cable companies became actively involved in offering generous provisions for access, many communities saw the need for groups and individuals to access their cable system directly — to have free channel space, to develop their own programming, in short, to become involved in their communities through using the medium of television.

*(Continued on page 18)*





## Dallas: Access is alive and well under Cable company management

By Jan Sanders,  
Community Access Manager of  
QUBE of Dallas

Can a cable firm and a community find true happiness in a situation where the cable firm is in charge of community access? The relationship between the industry and access has been like the marriage of necessity at times and reads like an afternoon soap opera. The love-hate battles that typified the early distrust of the cable firms for community access operations and vice versa were displaced by extravagant courtships during the metropolitan franchising period. And now that the honeymoon is over, let's take a look at a successful hook-up that is beginning to settle in after eighteen months of operation. Dallas, Texas' community access operation run by the cable firm might be the ideal marriage we have all been looking for.

For many of the "true believers" in the access movement it is difficult to believe that a cable firm can build a "real" community access operation; but that is what is happening in Dallas.



Dallas, Texas is an example of a large urban center ready and hungry for a modern communication system. The citizens groups that participated and helped shape the community access proposal for Dallas have eagerly jumped into the development of community access. The statistics alone would impress the most avid advocate of community access:

3,261 requests for use of access and information;

1,393 people certified to use access equipment — both portapak and studio;

243 organizations using the variety of access opportunities; and

163 people certified to use just the studio equipment.

Dallas citizens have access to the cable system and they are coming to feel it is *theirs*. This dynamic community involvement is one of the essential ingredients to a successful access operation. An early lesson preached at NFLCP conferences was that the city, the firm and the community needed to work cooperatively and with mutual respect. Access is working in Dallas because of this cooperation.

In capital investment alone, Warner Amex Communication has invested millions of dollars in access thus far and is perhaps two-thirds of the way toward completion. In what way does the cable firm, QUBE Cable of Dallas, benefit from such an extravagant and extensive community access operation? The bottom line might be pretty red at this early stage but the future is

what the cable industry is all about. The value to the firm should be examined from many angles. The political forces that helped the firm win the franchise, due in large part to the attractiveness of the access package, have been important during this typically hectic first year of construction. The Cable Television Board took the access workshops, attended studio openings and participated in cablecasts on access channels. Access afforded the firm some very valuable political goodwill at a very critical time.

Access staffers made community presentations about access development to organizations and clubs explaining what cable is, how it differs from over-the-air services and what the future potential of a community communications system can mean to them; thus demystifying the technology that will be a part of everyday life and a part of the future expansion of the firm's service.

The firm's customer service is strengthened because all the access sites, seven in the city to date, are neighborhood locations where subscribers can get their questions answered face-to-face, practice using the converter and QUBE console, and see what QUBE has to offer. New subscriber open houses are held monthly as well as viewing parties of access programs.

Special populations are being served by the access staff's community outreach specialists. An example is our older adults specialist. Two positive results occur: a segment of the market that might

not be ready for modern cable service is not only ready but involved in the production of programming of interest to them.

Access programming, produced as well as preproduced and submitted for playback, has offered the subscriber interesting and relevant viewing. This local dimension is something that the satellite competitors can never offer. In local educational programs alone, the cable firm and the subscriber has a nest egg on the ground. Dallas institutions supply more instructional material via cable than anyplace in the country — six channels, from kindergarten through continuing education. The value to the firm is not a casual add-on to their service but the beginnings of an essential community communications network which will link home, school, university and work site together. Via access activity QUBE Cable has become a community partner, the kind of partner that often takes businesses years to become.

But what are the advantages of a cable firm run access operation as opposed to a city run or non-profit organization run access? There is something intrinsically wrong with the idea that a cable firm cannot handle access. No one in the cable field has a corner on righteousness or "true community access" management. Being a non-profit community organization or a democratic city-appointed group does not guarantee the maintenance of community access. Neither does a firm run



access operation. Because of the distrust built up between access groups and the cable industry as a whole, it is hard to keep an open mind about what is happening.

As the legal basis exists today, pre-Senate Bill 66, the City of Dallas, has the regulatory power of enforcing the franchise in regards to access development. The Cable Board's chief assignment is community access and general franchise compliance. There is no shirking of the access requirements when the City executes this role. If the City were developing access itself they might tolerate bureaucratic delays as they so often do in a lot of City-community projects. In the case of a third party access operation, the City's role is one of persuasion rather than political clout. The result in Dallas has meant that QUBE Cable is ahead of schedule in the provision of access facilities, equipment, staff and training for the development of community access and the Citizens Cable Board is an enthusiastic partner. Many of the Board members have taken the certification training and are members of organizations that have cablecast on the many access channels. In that way they know first hand the value and potential of community programming.

The development of cable utilization by the City has not waited for the full construction of the cable system but is well underway as the cable system is being built. They are making imaginative use of their municipal a

access channels. The remote data terminal in City Hall's Public Affairs Office is being creatively utilized. QUBE Cable's Community Access Department has trained over 100 City employees in a very extensive field camera workshop, as well as a crew for studio production. The City run Public Library has become very involved in cable production. This close cooperation and participation in the community access development by the City itself has brought goodwill to the firm during its difficult first year.

The firm has an essential role in the smooth hand-off of tapes for cablecast. It is handled without a hitch because it is all under one single management from program development to final cablecast. This hand-off must take place no matter who is managing the community access development. In Dallas, the fact that this is all in-house is a great benefit to the community producer. Technical standards are maintained and monitored. Orderly scheduling procedures allow community producers the opportunity to promote their own programs, as well as the promotion provided by the firm. Access programs on Dallas's system are afforded the same promotion as the L.O. productions, appearing on the channel program guide, in the subscribers's guide and the subscriber newsletter.

The preventive maintenance schedule and demand maintenance to keep the access studios and field production equipment in tip-top

shape is a facet of community access that is often neglected in operations not run by the firm. The technical resources of the firm are available to support the community access needs. Instead of calling across town, the access manager can walk across the hall and receive assistance. This is true of all problem solving; delays are avoided by immediate handling by the firm's access manager.

Big city franchises with generous community access proposals have attracted community producers to come to work for cable firms. The professional expertise and dedication to community programming by the QUBE Cable staff of Dallas is an important ingredient to the success thus far. The willingness of the cable firm to hire people who were so dedicated to community access development indicates the firm's commitment to access. There is no question but that the people make the difference.

In QUBE Cable of Dallas, unlike some other firms, there is a clear distinction between L.O. production and community access, but there is a professional hand-off of projects, expertise and support that results in a great advantage to the community and to the subscriber.

So, with QUBE Cable in Dallas all of the essential ingredients are in place and the firm's management has a lot going for it; it just might be the ideal marriage we've all been looking for.



(Continued from page 14)

In many other places scattered across the country, independent, non-profit organizations, governed by boards of directors, were pioneers in development and promotion of public access, often before franchise monies were available or before any provisions for access existed.

New York University's George Stoney, a long-time public access advocate, insists that communities must take responsibility for public access in order for it to succeed. Many communities, working through nonprofit organizations, are succeeding. In several instances, such groups are playing a lead role in managing public access — scheduling and cablecasting programming on the access channels, promoting access, offering video workshops, providing production assistance, and, in some cases, actually producing access programming. A sampling of these groups follows.

#### FAYETTEVILLE OPEN CHANNEL Fayetteville, Arkansas

In 1977, Warner Amex negotiated a cable franchise in Fayetteville, Arkansas, which contained no more than a standard clause providing that, upon demand, the city was entitled to an access channel and facilities. Fayetteville, which has had cable since 1954, never made use of the clause.

Then, in 1979, a consortium of arts, social service, and other community groups formed a non-profit organization with the goal of starting up public access television in Fayetteville.

"At the same time," says Open Channel's general Manager Shea Crain, Warner was trying to get the Dallas Franchise. "That definitely worked in our favor," Crain explains. The non-profit group, through negotiations with Warner,

secured a 5-year contract to manage public access. Some funding also comes from the city. Equipment was provided through grant money.

Open Channel schedules 27 hours of programming each week, an amount which cannot increase due to shared channel space with CBN. Access programming includes educational, municipal, and public access.

#### AUSTIN COMMUNITY TELEVISION Austin, Texas

Austin Community Television (ACTV) was formed in 1972 when a group of University of Texas students petitioned the cable operator for public access channel space based on the recent FCC ruling requiring same. The cable operator agreed, and public access in Austin had its start.

In the early days, volunteers would drive 12 miles west of town to the cable system's head-end to cablecast tapes with borrowed equipment placed on the hood of a car. ACTV's scarce resources resulted in many innovations, including the use of car headlights to light live programming originating from the head end.

During the next several years, ACTV received grants from the City of Austin, CETA, and several foundations, eventually hiring a paid staff. Public access programming and community support increased steadily over the years.

In 1981, the City of Austin negotiated a new cable franchise with Austin CableVision (ATC) which includes generous public access provisions for the life of the 15-year franchise. ACTV has submitted a bid to become Austin's permanent access manager, but at present operates under a temporary city contract.

In addition to providing workshops to close to 100 people a month, ACTV schedules approximately 140 hours worth of educational, municipal and public access programming on 4 access channels each week.

#### BOSTON COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAMMING FOUNDATION Boston, Massachusetts

A year ago, Boston's Mayor set up the non-profit Boston Community Access Programming Foundation to manage the generous public access provisions included in the city's franchise with CableVision of Boston.

The Foundation, which sprang from the recommendations of a citizen's advocacy group, the Cable TV Access Coalition, has a broad mandate which includes managing public access, running the local Origination operation as well as one of the cable system's two institutional networks, and possibilities for managing leased access channels and pay per view services.

Franchise provisions for access include 20 per cent of the subscriber channels, 5 percent of the gross revenues and a guaranteed municipal channel.

The Foundation's Board of Trustees is appointed by the city, a method questioned by some members of the community. The present Board includes community representation as well as developers, with no cable background, two deputy mayors, and the city's cable attorney.

Since access programming often brings with it a certain amount of political "heat," it remains to be seen whether or not the City-appointed trustees will be able to take the controversy.



# MADISON COMMUNITY ACCESS CENTER (MCAC) Madison, Wisconsin

Since 1977, MCAC has been managing public access in Madison, including scheduling the use of channel space, cablecasting, and providing workshops for public access producers. Municipal and educational access are managed separately.

Executive Director Carl Kowarski sees fundraising as a key issue for nonprofit groups managing public access so that access is never "at the mercy of cable company or city monies." His board of directors raises 60% of MCAC's funding through grants, special events, telethons and the "Workplace Giving Campaign" through which public employees contribute through payroll deduction campaigns to nonprofit organizations.

MCAC schedules between 130 and 140 hours of programming each month, on one channel. According to Kowarski, public access has attracted mainly community activists, including many churches. Current community outreach efforts are geared toward "involving more mainstream groups."

MCAC has been working with the cable company, Complete Channel Television, since the franchising process began, in order to assure community involvement in access.

"The cable company is interested in the bottom line, and justifiably so," says Kowarski, noting that some types of access programming could endanger the company's image in the community. "A non-profit and a cable company can work together," he says, "but they have different purposes."

It is precisely the different purposes of cable companies and nonprofit groups which make public access management by a nonprofit

group preferable: the main purpose of a nonprofit group is to involve citizens in producing access programming in order to serve a wide variety of community needs, while the main purpose of a cable company is to make money. This is perhaps the most fundamental of the arguments favoring nonprofit access management.

Other advantages are that nonprofit groups are in a position to provide the motivation and continuing education necessary if access is to grow and become a diverse reflection of a community, and that a nonprofit board of directors can do fundraising so that public access is not contingent upon cable company or city monies.

Equally important, a nonprofit group dedicated specifically to access, can forge an identity for public access which is separate from a cable company's local origination, (LO), programming. This is a crucial distinction because although it may at times resemble access, LO is philosophically different than access in that it does not offer the community non-discriminatory direct control over television production.

One of the strongest advocates of access management by nonprofit groups is Chuck Sherwood, co-founder of Manhattan's nonprofit Channel L. Working Group. It must be a nonprofit group," Sherwood says. "It is totally inappropriate for a cable company to manage public access. The cable company has the incentive to make it not work, despite its public relations value. They need views on other programming services and are threatened by anything that competes."

New York's state-wide cable commission is currently studying

proposed rules which would leave public access management to cable companies and would allow cable operators to fill unused portions of access channels with commercial programming. Sherwood calls the displacement of access "a corporate strategy." "Once a pay service goes on an access channel, there's no way a company can be pushed to remove it," he says.

Other skeptics of the company-run access point out that it can work, but they are worried about the long run possibilities. "Warner Amex in Dallas has very good access because they have good management and good people right now. What happens when company policy changes or new people are hired?" George Stoney asks. He cites Long Island as an example. The cable operator there used to support access. With new management, access was dropped except for two hours a week of "community service" programming which services many towns via a mobile van. "The decisions as to who gets access are now political decisions," Stoney says, adding, "Needless to say, there is no room for a school board meeting or a city council meeting."

"Public access is strongest where local people have had to fight for it," Stoney observes. "It needs to be headed by a community organization that knows how to get people in... We haven't found the perfect solution," Stoney adds. "It's still a pioneering effort."

*Paula Manley and Martha Hartzog are Programming Director and General Manager of Austin Community Television, respectively.*



# Train Your Community LA Style



by Sharon Goldenberg

A community television facility, whether operated by a cable company or a non-profit corporation, needs more than staff to accomplish the work necessary to make it successful. A way of filling this need is to train and utilize community volunteers.

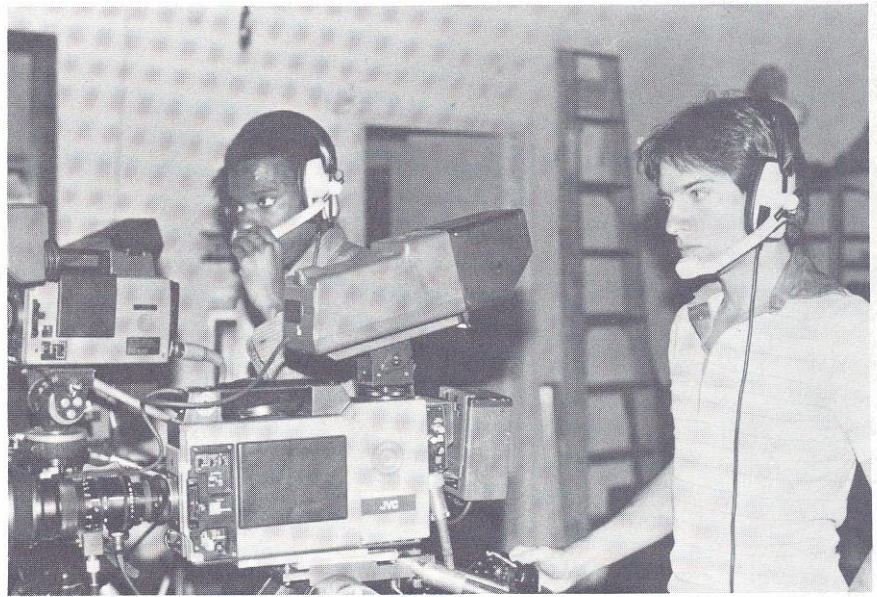
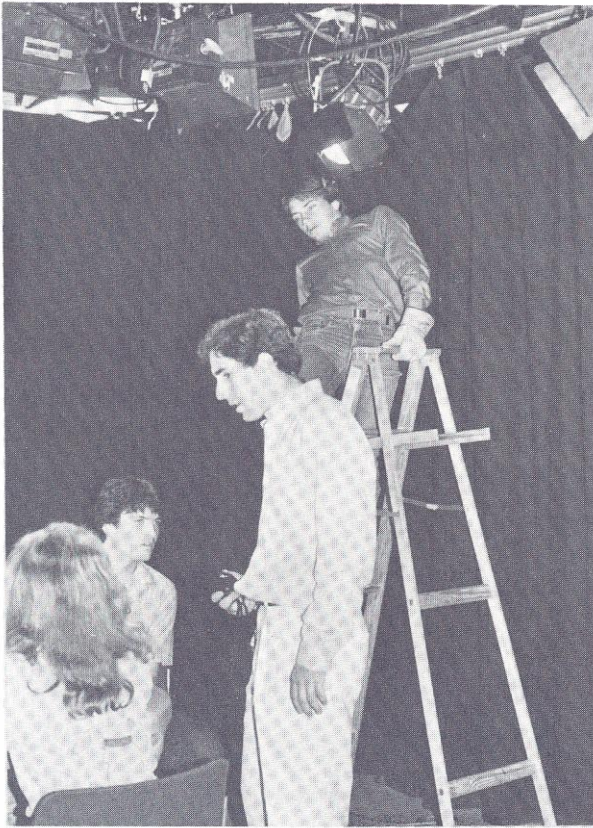
It has been my experience, working as a community television facilitator for the past seven years, that a training program must accomplish two main goals. First, it must teach *basic production skills* to community members who lack prior video experience and who wish to become producers. Second, it must offer *advanced video production classes* to community producers who wish to become volunteers. Volunteers can then aid beginning community producers by assisting in the teaching of classes and, with staff acting in a supervisory capacity, operate and maintain the access facility.

Initially, it is necessary to educate the public about what access offers a community. At Valley Cable in Encino, CA., we developed an intensive nine-hour workshop program to teach residents the basics of remote video production, and allowed workshop graduates to borrow Valley's equipment to produce their own programming.

The original nine-hour sessions, held twice weekly for three hours on consecutive days, taught people portapak, lighting, audio, and scripting skills. Five hundred community members were instructed in about a year. We accomplished our main goal; to educate the community about public access, but many practical problems remained.

We found after exhausting ourselves training hundreds of community people, workshop participants did not master all the skills needed to produce the high-quality programs they envisioned themselves producing. They would become frustrated in their attempts to produce a program, would continually sign our remote equipment, and end up not completing a program which would inevitably leave a void on the Public Access Channel itself. We found that many people preferred to not produce a program at all, rather than produce a program technically unacceptable to themselves. In monthly reports submitted to our city, we often found that there were hundreds of hours of use on our equipment, but very few shows actually being completed and cablecast on the Community Television Channel.





At the same time, a group of people were consistently returning to Valley Cable, week after week, wanting specifically to learn how to use our equipment. They were not necessarily associated with a community group and often did not have ideas for programming. We realized that this group of core "volunteers" with lots of time on their hands, could assist the community producers to produce successful programming. Our goal was to have these volunteers learn advanced production skills so that, with staff supervision, they could operate our studio facilities, assist in the teaching of workshops, and assist community people with little or no video skills in the production of community television programming.

On Fridays Valley opens its studios to anyone who wants to produce a studio production and has submitted the appropriate applications for studio time. The community member or organization wishing to produce an "Open Studio" program needs no technical hands-on experience to gain access to studio time. The entire studio crew consists of 12 "volunteers" with

one staffperson supervising the production of "Open Studio" programming. Each Friday, four different "Open Studio" shows are videotaped with production continuing from 10:00 a.m. through 8:00 p.m. Programs videotaped range from simple talk shows to music, dance, and theatre pieces.

On Thursdays particularly relevant "Open Studio" programs are selected to expand into continuing series programming. Because only two such programs are videotaped during Thursday productions, programs are of a better technical quality. These programs are, again, produced and crewed solely by volunteers, with one staffperson as studio manager.

Also, Thursday evenings a one-hour, live, phone-in program, is produced. Crew for this program is about one quarter staff and three quarters volunteers.

The above concerns studio production only. Valley also has active remote production facilities, including five portapaks, and one on-line and three off-line editing systems. Remote productions are produced by community producers as well as by community volunteers

who produce a monthly news and current events magazine called "Valley Magazine". "Valley Magazine" enables Valley community groups which do not have the time to learn how to use our remote facilities to get their ideas and events on Community Television without any classes, any classes.

With the intensive and extensive programming that we do for our Community Television Channel, it was important for us to develop a durably consistent volunteer structure. One of the big problems access facilities with an active volunteer program face is volunteer retention. Volunteers typically learn as much as they can from a given facility and move on. We needed to develop a system whereby the learning of new skills would be stretched over many months, so that Valley Cable might retain the benefit of the volunteer's energies and acquired skills for a long period of time.

What we have developed is a volunteer training program separate from our community producers training program. The longer the volunteer remains in the program,





the more advanced production training she/he receives. For example, when people initially volunteer at Valley, they are, first of all, required to volunteer a specific amount of time: one month of Fridays working on "Open Studio". In exchange, volunteers will learn how to operate studio cameras, audio board, character generator, and become floor managers and production assistants for lighting and VTR. Once they have completed their initial month of volunteer time, volunteers can choose to become "interns". An intern must devote ten hours a week for six months to the Community Television Facility. Interns are trained as VTR Operators (which includes running videotaped roll-ins as well as record decks with an editing control unit), technical directors, lighting directors and assistant directors. Having attained proficiency in these fields, they can then move on to the coveted position of director. When interns have exhausted all crew positions in "Open Studio", they can then move on to crews on the more professional Thursday productions. Once proficiency is gained in all positions on Thursday's taped

productions, interns move on to working on the live-phone-in programs Thursday evenings.

Access to the remote facilities operates in the same manner. People initially gain access to a single tube color camera, Beta deck and off-line editing system. They advance to using a three-tube, three quarter inch deck and on-line editing system. In exchange for access to better quality, interns must work with beginning community producers in the production of community programming. Each new community producer is assigned an intern to work with them on their first production. This ensures that first-time producers will not become frustrated with their lack of skills and will generally complete their first production. Our system has also shown that, after community producers complete their first production, they also want to produce more programming and gain access to better equipment. Go do this, they must become an intern and help teach other people the skills they have learned.

In support of our Intern/Volunteer program we have also developed a number of part-time

paid positions that are filled by the best of our interns. In the past year, Valley Cable's Community Television Department has hired four part-time staffpeople from our intern program. Two of these people have moved onto full time positions in television production.

The Training and Intern/Volunteer Program at Valley Cable will probably not be appropriate for every community. Remember, Los Angeles has an overabundance of would-be producers and television stars. Many of these people are clamoring at the doors of Valley Cable wanting to learn to become producers, technicians, etc., hoping to eventually land a job in the "business". We therefore can ask a lot of our volunteers and offer, in exchange, useful future job skills.

A training program must remain flexible and constantly evaluate and re-evaluate itself, so it can grow from its successes and failures. Try not to become personally attached to any one type of training program solely because it is "your" idea. A training program that is not working wastes time and does your community a disservice.

---

*Sharon Goldenberg, Director of Programming, Valley Cable, Encino, Ca.*



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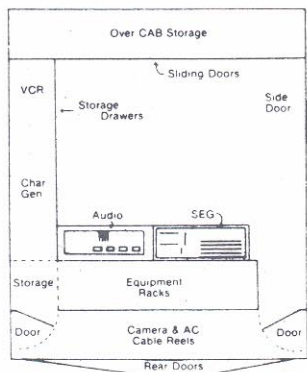
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# Equipment Selection and Sanity Are These Compatible?

by Mike Addyman

In order to select equipment for access use, it is important to develop a process for judging priorities, features, and potential future needs.

## Laying Ground Work

Wholesale or mail order houses offer equipment at greatly reduced prices, but do not offer after-sale technical support. If you have video vendors within driving distance of your access center, evaluate the benefits of purchasing locally with technical support versus short term cost savings from mail order houses.

Here are some truisms for all equipment purchases:

- Competitive bidding results in lower costs. Particularly on larger orders, dealers will trim their margin to move more volume of equipment.
- Try to look at entire video systems, rather than individual components. This will also result in net savings.
- Get service manuals for everything. This is vital if you intend to maintain gear "in house."
- Avoid buying equipment sight unseen. A demonstration will help avoid unplanned and unbudgeted additions or modifications to the equipment. For example, a manager bought a titler for an editing system, only to discover that the characters' video level was factory preset and no character edging was available. The result — titles used on certain video backgrounds were illegible.

## Footwork and Skullsweat

Before you purchase any equipment, determine where your video needs lie presently and in the future. Will you be working with area schools or government bodies? What format equipment do they already own? What are the cable system design highlights? Will you be programming interactive video? Determine these needs and work with your staff to develop a concept of minimum equipment needed for maximum flexibility in usage. For instance, a titler could be shared between editing and studio production. Further, the editing system could be connected electronically via an audio-follow-video routing switcher or video and audio patch panels to the production control room. Playback of programming could occur in either location, allowing more flexibility in scheduling production or editing time.

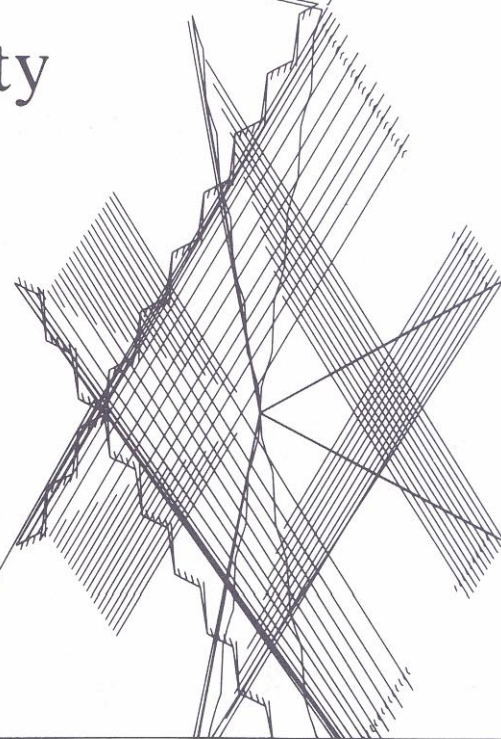
Take your equipment list to dealers and their engineers, explain your needs and your budget limits on each function (editing, control room, mobile van, portapaks.) You may need to revise your ideas 2 or 3 times to meet your budget.

## "I'm Looking Over..."

When you have recommendations from dealers, start setting up demonstrations. Side by side "A-B" testing is most effective, but is harder to arrange. If you can't set up a product demonstration, ask for a list of purchasers.

Call these purchasers to discuss the equipment's durability, ease of maintenance, or operating features. Another truism is that consumer electronics (cameras & VCR's) will generally be less durable and should be avoided in high-use situation.

When selecting videocassette recorders check the spec sheets for color mode lines of resolution (should be 240 or up) and video signal to noise ratio (should be in mid or upper 40's.) Check for special features — VCR search with picture in forward or reverse, remote control, dub mode. Be aware that JVC dub mode is incompatible with Sony or Panasonic.





### What Format?

It is good to offer as many formats as your center can afford, in order to accomodate all users. As with cameras, 1/2 inch videocassette

recorders enjoy a 2 or 3 to 1 savings over 3/4 inch portapaks. Additionally 3/4 inch decks are limited to 20 minute cassettes and are heavier than 1/2 inch decks. But again 3/4 inch offers a stronger signal which will maintain stability throughout editing and dubbing.

### Which Switch is Which?

In most centers, a small self-contained special effects generator, (SEG), or production switcher is common. Good units are available from Panasonic, JVC, Sony, and Crosspoint Latch, plus some others. Factors to consider in selecting switchers are: the number of inputs, genlock capability, number of patterns, and keying or titling options. These are again balanced against cost (under \$10,000.) If your budget is larger, look at the small S.E.G.s from Ross or Grass Valley Group (under \$20,000.)

Your 1/2 inch format might be determined by what your local schools have purchased. Sony and Panasonic both have 1/2 inch edit systems in Beta and VHS respectively. Additionally each can work with 3/4 inch units as well as JVC which has 1/2 inch source to 3/4 inch master edit systems available.

### I Can't Hear You

Audio boards are available from Tapco, Teac, Shure, Ramsa, and

many others. Items to compare include: signal to noise ratio, mic/line inputs, stereo capability (if you desire), channel assignment, and metering. Check to see if your selection can be expanded to more inputs if future growth warrants it.

### "Now It's Time to Say Goodbye..."

Time Base Correctors, (TBC's), have changed greatly in the last year and a half. A unit purchased one year ago for \$33,000 now sells for \$24,000. The Timebase Truism — get the best (most costly) you can afford. You will need a genlock TBC to run tapes through your switcher (\$9,000 to \$13,000), and if you are planning interactive programming or live remotes, you will want a full frame storer synchronizer (\$15,000 to \$24,000). Look for the following features: window of correction (the more lines, the better); noise reduction (switchable levels); tape format compatability (1/2 inch and 3/4 inch); and production options (compressor/position, 2 channel with digital effects, correction in "dub" mode, etc.). Strong units are available from ADDA, Harris and Edutron/Fortel.

These are the major areas to consider when selecting equipment. Of course, lights, microphones, monitors, and consoles also need to be purchased. It is important to develop a good relationship with local video dealers. They can be a great help in providing professional advice.

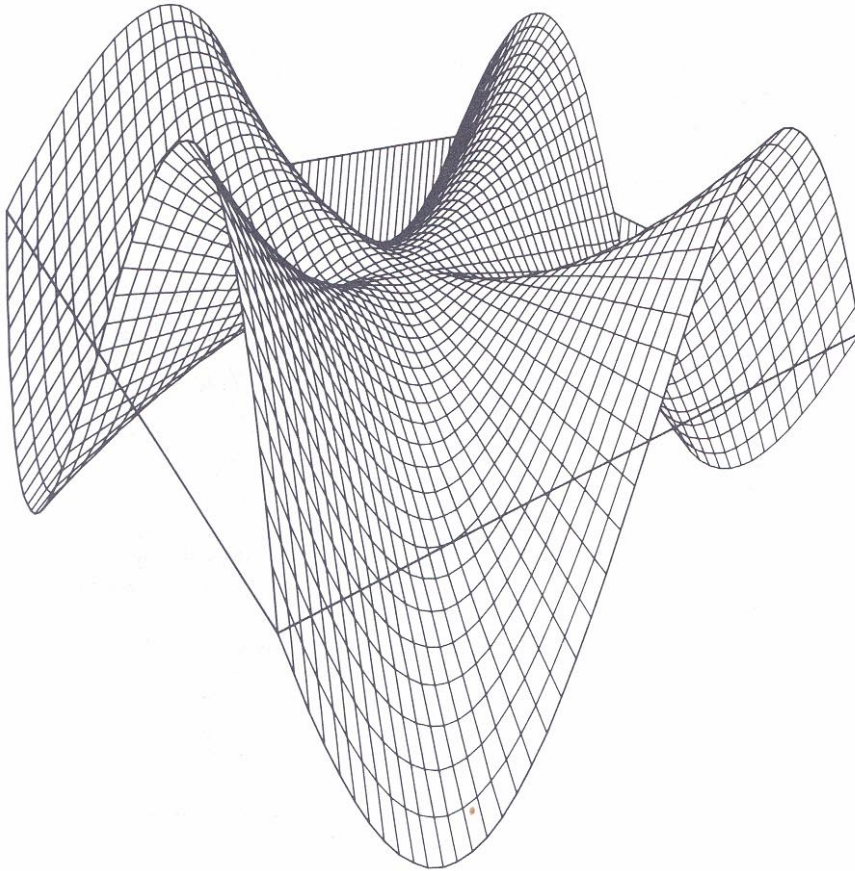
*Mike Addyman, Production Manager, U.S. Cable of Northern Indiana.*

Flexibility and picture quality are important when selecting video cameras. But these qualities must be weighed against cost considerations. Single tube cameras offer operator ease and up to threefold cash savings compared to the cheapest three tube camera. Good flexible, single tube cameras are made by JVC, Sony, Panasonic, and Hitachi, among others. Remember exclude consumer models. Some of these cameras can be genlocked to provide additional studio cameras or even be used as primary studio cameras.

Three tube cameras provide much cleaner pictures but, as mentioned before might cost from \$5,000 and up. They will also require more maintenance technical proficiency and set up time. Relatively cheap three tube cameras are made by JVC, Ikegami, Sony, and others. Almost any camera in this class can be purchased for studio, remote, or both considerations.



# The Burden of Expenditures Or How I Learned To Love The Budget



by Wayne Kight

**P**& L sheets, cash flow, operating and capital costs, account codes, to the novice budgeter, these are terms that may not mean much now, but very soon become near and dear to all of us. The creation of a budget is as necessary to a smooth studio

operation as a road map is to a successful vacation. In both instances, planning is required to reach your final destination. But as a good vacationer, you must first determine what your objective is and by what means you can measure your success. Likewise, as a studio manager, before you develop any plans and associated budgets, you need an objective. As an example, you may be a municipally-funded studio and an objective would be to cover a minimum of five departmental meetings per department per year. If you meet this objective, you are successful.

A budget should be approached as a planning tool versus an allowance. You have scheduled monies to be spent against specific projects using all the resources available to you to obtain the best guesstimate. Just because an amount is budgeted, you need not spend all the allocated funds. A positive variance (money remaining in the account at the end of a reporting period) reflects better managerial skills than a bold red negative variance.

Before getting into the mechanics of budgeting, let's examine some definitions. Ultimately you should prepare two budgets; one for capital expenditures, and one for operating expenditures.

Capital dollars, by definition, purchase long term items or betterments. Such expenditures would include: cameras, videotape machines, switchers, office furniture and the like. Capital equipment also allows for depreciation tax breaks of which your accountant or controller will have to set schedules.

Operational dollars, on the other hand, allow you to have personnel and materials available to use your capital equipment effectively.

Capital expenditures are a function of many variables, not the least of which is the level of activity in your studio. As more community producers request more time, additional capital will need to be spent to add equipment, thereby allowing the growth curve to continue climbing. Also, if equipment repairs exceed



replacement costs, capital dollars are again required to replace the aging gear. If capital dollars become scarce for replacement or additional equipment, it is your responsibility to seek what equipment is available in your community to supplement what you already have. You may be surprised to learn that group of musicians has access to a stereo mixing board for the upcoming concert! Ask and ye shall ascertain!

Capital dollars will not and cannot be as fluid as operating dollars. Operating costs don't remain flat, but rather appear as a sixty cycle sine wave. For example, once every hundred years, you will need to budget for a centennial celebration! Seriously, let's examine what should be included in a basic operating budget and some of the nuts and bolts required to obtain those figures.

Again, revisit your objectives. In order to meet those objectives, you must develop a plan. This should be as simple as a twelve month calendar. Work your way through the year marking off all regular programs produced, as well as special events you expect to produce: election coverage, parades, conventions, etc. You now have your own road map and a preliminary route to travel.

Specific dollar amounts must now be assigned in order to reach your objective via your plan.

#### Salaries

Two accounts should be posted. One for salaried or managerial positions and one for hourly employees. Remember to include extra payroll expenses such as benefits, overtime, workmen's compensation, to name a few.

#### Materials and Supplies

Now that you have a staff budgeted, you need money to purchase the materials and supplies required to allow you to produce the planned programming. This includes tape stock, lamp replacements, artwork, etc. There are a few shortcuts you may want to employ when figuring your tape and lamp budget.

Start-up tape costs for new facilities are much greater than for mature studio operations. For purpose of discussion, let's examine a mature operation. If you plan calls

for 120 hours of original programming to be produced, you should budget for 40 hours of new tape stock, or 1/3 of planned "finished" program hours. Why not 120 hours or more? Many of your programs will not be archived, and thereby be reused and reused. You also have supplemented stock from last year's supply. Historically, the 1/3 amount has proven to be an adequate amount to work with. This also takes into account any bicycling and award submissions.

For lamps, if you have a fourteen foot grid with a minimum of two feet above the grid for heat dissipation, allow four lamps per instrument per year. If your dissipation area is less, allow for a minimum of six lamps per instrument. Don't forget lamps for projection equipment!

#### Sets and Props

Examine your plan for specific needs.

#### Equipment Rent

Do you have an FM simulcast scheduled this year? Wouldn't it make fiscal sense to rent a stereo board rather than attempting to justify a large capital expense? How about renting a hydrolic lift to set that high angle shot for the Fourth of July Parade? Revisit your planning sheet and be sure!

#### Technical and Creative Services

You may need the expertise of an audio engineer to run that stereo board for the right mix. Check that plan.

#### Vehicle Expense

If you use your personal vehicle to transport equipment, either log your mileage to be deducted from your personal taxes, or budget for reimbursement.

#### Travel and Entertainment

Wouldn't it be great to have fat here!? Use your head and budget for necessary conferences and travel as required.

#### Repairs and Maintenance

If you own it, it's going to break, right? How can you possibly figure your expected repair costs? If the equipment is 0-1 year old, use a multiplier of .03 of capital costs for anticipated repair. For equipment one year old and beyond, use a

multiplier of .07.

Example: \$5,000 VTR

First Year: \$5,000 x .03 = \$150.00

Second Year +: \$5,000 x .07 = \$350.00

First year repairs and maintenance is lower because of manufacturer warranty and repair.

#### Miscellaneous

The catch-all. If you budget more than \$50 per month, you are not a good manager. There should be an account home for spillage over \$50 a month.

And, finally, set aside accounts for:

- Postage
- Subscriptions and memberships
- Telephone

As mentioned before in this article, a measure of success within your operation is how closely you meet your objectives. When working with budgets, a measurement tool would be a profit and loss (P & L) statement. Such a document would be generated by your controller or accounting department. It reports money spent against money budgeted. Be sure you are routed the appropriate accounts for your department. If no P & L statement is produced for you, produce your own. List each account on a spread sheet complete with budgeted dollar amount per account per month. As an expense is incurred, debit the appropriate account and carry down the new balance. At a glance, you realize which accounts you will generate a deficit and in which accounts you'll have a surplus.

Budgeting is a necessary management skill that should be honed to allow for the successful growth of your facility. The sooner you establish budgeting guidelines and adhere to them, the quicker your fiscal spending awareness will peak. The more often you detail a budget, the easier this Herculean task becomes.

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*Wayne Kight, Manager of  
Community Programming  
Operations, ATC.*



Public Access Television

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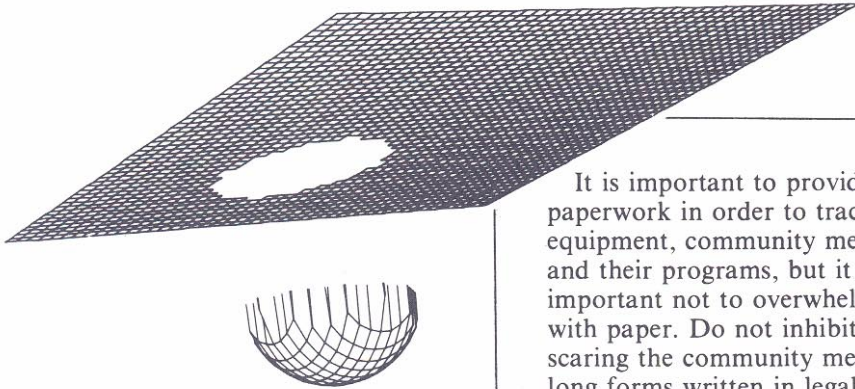
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# Operating Rules and Procedures form the Backbone of Operations



The Operating Rules and Procedure guidelines are the backbone of the day to day operations of an access center. They serve as the basis of understanding between access staff and the community. These guidelines should be spelled out clearly and made readily available to all who use the center.

But the manual should not be considered the final word — it is an evolving document which attempts to meet the users and the staff's needs. As the community increases its video production skills, these guidelines will change to meet their new expertise. It is important to get rid of a form that doesn't work and change rules that community members find objectionable.

While operating rules and procedures differ according to the community, a similar thread runs throughout the guidelines. Develop a manual for the community which includes the following elements:

- Procedures for the use of studios, editing suite, portable equipment and access channels.
- Examples of all forms to be filled out by the users.
- Procedures for enrolling in training courses.
- Rights of users regarding program content.
- Guidelines for program production.
- A description of the concept of access.
- Suggestions on how a community member might use the access facility.

It is important to provide paperwork in order to track equipment, community members, and their programs, but it is also important not to overwhelm the user with paper. Do not inhibit usage by scaring the community member with long forms written in legalese.

At the first training session, present a manual of necessary information that is written in a readable encouraging tone. Ask the users to read the manual before the next training session. Many centers require users to sign a form acknowledging that they read the rules and accept the responsibilities of abiding by them.

Forms which are essential to the smooth working of any access center are:

- Program proposal form: This asks the potential producer to sit down and think through his program idea and provide information on his program. This does not mean a story board should be submitted; only the name of the producer, program idea, equipment needed for shoot, possible time for shooting the program.
- Equipment check out and check in forms: These forms help the center keep track of the location of its equipment. It should require very specific identification of equipment (all equipment including cables connectors — everything) time checked out and time will be returned.
- Cablecast request form: It should include name of program, name of individual or organization submitting tape, name of producer, length of program, day and time requested for initial cablecast and subject of program.
- Equipment user agreement should be signed by user before equipment is checked out. It outlines their responsibilities toward the equipment when lost

or damaged in their possession.

- Performer release form should be a part of the portapak package. It authorizes the use of a performer's appearance on videotape with their signature. (It should also explain that no compensation will be provided for the appearance.)
- Videotape labels and inventory forms: It is important to have plenty of labels available to the user to identify his tape, the title, length, and whether it is a work in progress or ready to be cablecast. Inventory forms keep track of the life of the videotapes so that they can be recycled or retired.
- Cablecast log outlines the programs to be cable cast on a daily basis so volunteers can put tapes on at correct times.

User rights is an area not usually addressed in manuals, but is becoming an important issue in the access field. Operating Rules and Procedures should provide guidelines — not only to protect access centers but to protect the users. Producers of an access program should retain rights to that program's content. By using access facilities, the producer is giving the center limited rights to cablecast their program over the access channel. Under no circumstances should a center duplicate a portion of the access producer's tape without prior permission, use a public access tape on any commercial or non access channel or make a copy of the tape for a third party.

If presented up front and in a positive way — operating rules and procedures will be accepted by the community as organizing tools to help the center to run efficiently, avoid misunderstandings and broken promises. Examples of these documents are available in the Educational Packet Series published by the NFLCP.



# No More Graying in Marin for Local Cable Programming

by Helen Weiss,  
Marin Community Video Executive  
Director

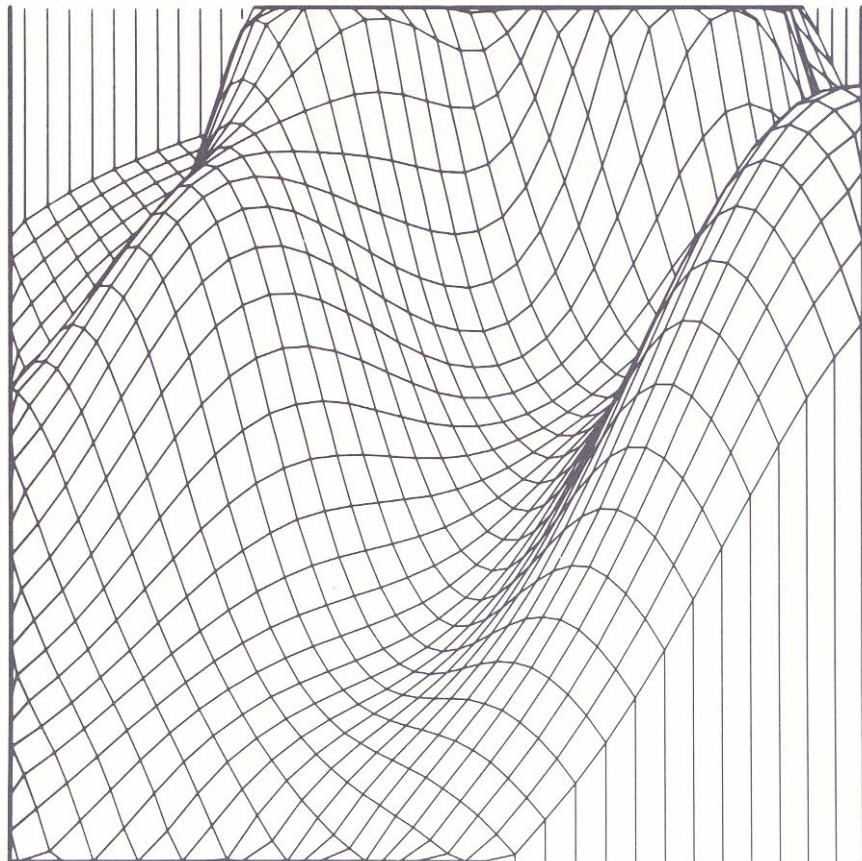
*Over the past few years, due in part to the highly competitive franchising processes, we have seen a number of terms used to designate access. There has been a graying of the definitions of ACCESS (noncommercial programming produced by community volunteers... the content of that programming determined by the individual, group or organization who produces it) and LOCAL ORIGINATION (programming produced by the paid staff of the cable company which is normally advertiser supported). This graying has evolved because some cable companies have been uncomfortable with the concept of community control of the content of the programs. By "graying" the distinction between access and local origination the cable company could potentially censor or control program content on access channels. (Sue Miller Buske, "Status Report on Community Access Programming on Cable" in **The Cable/Broadband Communications Book, Vol. 3, 1982-83**, Ed. Mary Louise Hollowell, Communications Press, Inc., Washington, D.C. 1983, p. 105-6.*

In Marin County today, there is both a designated access channel owned by the County of Marin and a local origination channel operated by Viacom Cable, which is the franchise holder for Southern and Central Marin. The access channel, Marin Access 31, is a combined government, educational and public access channel, operated by a nonprofit management organization called Marin Community Video (MCV). Viacom's local origination is known as TV 30.

Both channels have locally oriented programming available on

the 24-channel basic service package. By December 1983, when the Viacom system upgrade is completed all 46,000 homes will be able to receive both the access and LO channels among the 24 channels for \$8.95 per month. The homes still limited to 12 channel service can only receive Marin 11, a "hybrid" local origination and access channel.

The following overview of community programming in Marin will offer a background on how and why the County ensured that LO and access were separated and the role of Marin Community Video as the nonprofit management corporation. Marin's original community programming was the first cablecast in 1973 on the Televue System (the predecessor of Viacom) by a group of community volunteers who founded Marin Community Video to produce and disseminate educational and community oriented information

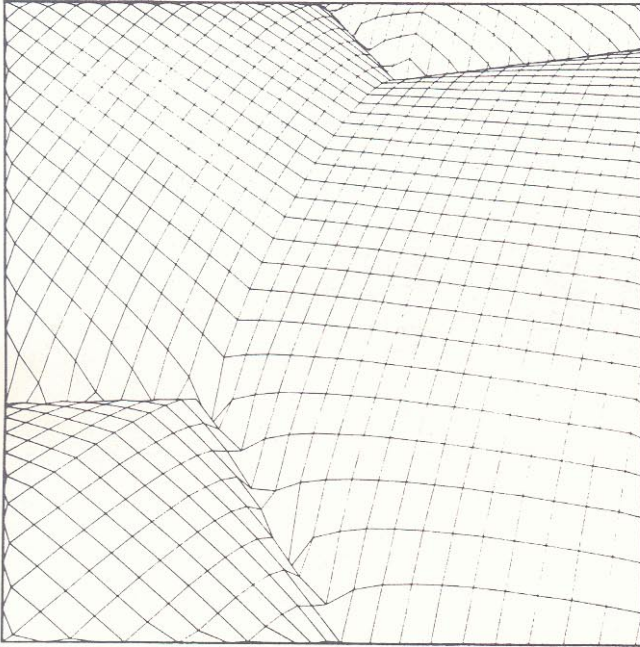


on local cable systems. Using the 1971 Federal Communications Commission rules as a basis to negotiate with the cable operator for access to playback time, Marin Community Video coordinated volunteer produced programming through 1976. But this arrangement changed in 1976 when Viacom, which had bought Tele-vue and several smaller systems, agreed to build a studio as part of a rate increase agreement.

Marin Community Video did receive some subsidies from Tele-vue and then from Viacom \$800/mo. to \$1000 per month during the period of 1975-79 to do "hands on" training with portapak which MCV had acquired through donations and grants. From 1973 to 1976 MCV coordinated program scheduling, playback of videotapes and publicity in addition to training.

However, in 1976, when Viacom built a studio, it hired its own staff.





The programming from 1976 through 1982 was increasingly dominated by "talking heads", call-in programs and several entertainment series.

Playback of pre-recorded tapes for the College of Marin Telecommunications Department and Marin Community Video's volunteer-produced programming was made available to each in two hour time slots one evening per month. When the Viacom staff scheduled the programming only several evenings per week were being used. Although due to the must carries, only duplication hours, primarily in the evenings were available, the amount of programming produced was limited by Viacom's restrictions on the use of the equipment that they owned.

Both the studio equipment and eventually the field equipment, purchased in 1979, could only be used by Viacom's paid staff and a handful of college video interns. Members of the public could submit ideas and topics to the programming staff which then fit the coverage in formatted studio programs, a 30 minute magazine or an occasional special. Like a public affairs department of a commercial television station, the extent to which the public could serve as a "community producer" was limited to organizing guests for talk shows or assembling information and people for location coverage. Playback of videotapes was limited to ¾ inch videotape.

In 1982, as part of a rate increase agreement with the County of Marin, Viacom agreed to set aside a separate, noncommercial dedicated access channel for government, educational and public access uses. For the first time a clear distinction had been drawn between "access" and "LO". There was to be no more graying of the terms used for community programming in Marin.

The provisions for funding in the amount of \$35,000 per year and a one-time equipment package of \$58,000 were guaranteed *in writing*. The County of Marin would own the video equipment and contract with a third party to operate the access channel.

Marin Community Video, (MCV), which by 1982 had become one of the oldest continuously operating access centers in California, was designated as the nonprofit access management corporation to coordinate training and programming for the Marin Access 31.

Under the contract with the County, Viacom has agreed to fund the operation of the channel for \$35,000 per year and to allow the franchise fee to be increased from 3% to 5%. Most of the proceeds from the franchise increase have been earmarked for coverage of the Marin County Board of Supervisors meetings. This \$30,000 contract which Marin Community Video has with the County includes weekly coverage of meeting highlights which are edited into a 30 minute program for cablecasting, the evening

following the meeting.

Since Marin Access 31 was launched on January 25, 1983 the training and programming opportunities it has offered have been responded to enthusiastically. More than 100 community organizations have submitted programming for playback.

Twenty community producer teams (each team is comprised of 4 persons who live or work in Marin County) have been certified to use portable and editing equipment after completing a three to five day training session. An additional 70 local residents with prior video experience have passed community producer tests and are doing productions. 65 groups are currently on the waiting list. An average of two new applications are received weekly.

Groups certified for training have varied from environmental and energy organizations to PTAs, human service agencies, religious and arts groups. Nearly half of the groups are ad hoc team that have organized themselves to be trained. The balance of the teams represent community organizations with staff and volunteers who have become involved in productions.

Marin Access 31 is cablecasting six hours per week. Mondays from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Tuesdays from 7-9 p.m. By the Fall, Marin Access 31 will be cablecasting four days per week from 3:30-9 p.m. The cablecasting site is located at the Marin County Civic Center and consists of a room for playback. Due to the problem of night and weekend access to the building for the public, Marin Access 31 training and portapak check-out is conducted at Marin Community Video's office and production center located 5 miles from the Civic Center in a Coop shopping center.

TV 30 has become a full-time local origination channel. It uses the daytimes to carry CSPAN coverage and also the Hearst Daytime satellite services from New York. Evening programming Mondays through Fridays includes locally originated sports events, studio call-ins and magazine programs produced by the TV 30 staff that are interspersed with San Francisco Bay Area programs such as the California Music Channel. Telefrance and pre-packaged programs from UC Berkeley are also run.





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A Publication of the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers

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